/575 cont./
261 days of need are over, they recover /576/ surprisingly fast; serious after-effects or a weakening of their health scarcely ever appear. Habit has taught them how best to overcome the brief periods of hunger without harm.

262 439 Ever since the Yamana have had easy access to the various farms, they have bartered there for all kinds of European food and luxuries, such as sugar and wine, coffee and tea, onions, canned tomatoes, and other things. They also acquired cooking pots, in which they prepare our foods so that they are reasonably tasty. This strange diet, however, is not good for their health. [14] Besides toothache, other physical ailments appear, which the people in olden times were fortunately spared despite all kinds of deprivations.

2. How They Divide the Booty

225 We must insert here a few data about the way in which larger pieces of game are used. On the one hand we shall mention obligations of a social nature, for which we shall later give more detailed reasons. On the other hand, the receipt of a gift cannot be compared with ordinary food-getting. Since, however, in the case of the most important animals hunted, namely, seals and whales, there is a definite obligation to let others share it, we shall most conveniently describe here the prevailing custom.

Every local group greets with indescribable rejoicing a whale that has been driven inland or deposited on the beach. Dense swarms of sea birds announce this extraordinary gift of nature. According to the general conception, any man who has first seen or touched the whale is the owner of it, not, however, in the sense that he alone may eat of this animal, the enormous masses of which he would, in any case, be incapable of coping with, but only insofar as it is up to him to arrange an orderly distribution (347).

347. From an earlier period when whales were still plentiful Bridges (a):208 reported: "Certain persons, those who first found the whale, have the right to distribute it" /cited in English/.

/589 cont./

264 574 regard him as moderate and slow. Modest and contented reserve is very much praised (366). When several people are together,

366. Earlier Despard (b):680 mentioned that the Yamana "hold gluttony in great abhorrence. In their language the word for gentleman is 'smalleater' " /cited in English/.

they watch each other; the one who acts as though he would rather not eat a thing makes the best impression. Within the narrower family circle people are emphatically warned of mistakes of this nature in the presence of a stranded whale, for now there is great danger that someone will let himself go too far, given this favorable opportunity. In all this there is probably also an unconscious warning against damaging one's own health. It has been proved that the human stomach does not tolerate the great amounts of fat that are suddenly offered it. It is necessary to become somewhat accustomed to it (367). There is another

367. Bridges (MM:IX, 13;1875), on April 20, 1874, observed the ravenous appetite of several families: "The natives have suffered much temporary pain from eating the whale, and I hear that this is usual at first, but passes off with the continued use of whale-meat" /cited in English/. Thus a certain habituation is necessary for a normal digestion when large amounts of fat are eaten.

danger. Whale fat is considered tastier the longer the animal has lain dead in the water; it then melts by itself and is known as dégalĕx in this state. Not infrequently there is serious poisoning when such putrified fat and meat are eaten, as missionaries have repeatedly reported. 164 262

For example, we have the following description by Lawrence, dated March 25, 1887 (MM:XXI, 173;1887): "A canoe brought

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[to Ushuaia] the sad intelligence of several Yahgans and Ona Indians being poisoned from eating fish...(368). The melancholy

368. From data given below we realize that a whale is meant.

disaster having taken place among the natives now engaged by Mr. Bridges upon the farm [in Puerto Haberton]" /cited in English/. Lawrence went there personally (369). "We found the

369. Later Lothrop (b):186 more precisely determined the place where this whale was deposited as the northern edge of Bahía Cambaceres.

people still suffering from the effects of poison. Nineteen men, women and children (Ona and Yahgans) had died during the past week, the others were slowly recovering" /cited in English/. Lawrence saw the hopeless condition of those people. "Arriving at the place, we found them scattered about; three men and several children were lying in a very weak state; two of the former were unconscious most of the time...We went a little farther and found the lifeless body of a man who had apparently died /590/ about two days before...Near the body of the man we found in different places five dogs which had died from the same cause. We also found in another place part of the body of another man, the rest having been destroyed by two dogs...I will now give a few particulars of the circumstances. About a fortnight ago a canoe arrived at Down-east, and brought the report that a small whale had been found in Picton Island. They went over in Mr. Bridges' boat, and found parts of it, lying on the beach, which they brought back, and having some doubts about its quality, at first hesitated to eat it, but afterwards were persuaded by the Ona saying they had eaten such before. All who were there having taken a little, felt very unwell on the morrow, and gradually became worse, and in a few days those whom we suppose had eaten more than others succumbed...[Others] suppose it to have been a sword fish [a Drescher /Orca magellanica/; p. 37 /untranslated/]. It was about seven feet long. I have also been informed that of

/590 cont./

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late years they have not made use of such, having previously understood it was injurious" /cited in English/.

A similar case, soon after, created no less serious disorder, and Burleigh wrote about it on December 26, 1888 (MM:XXIII, 98;1889): "Numbers of people were suddenly striken down with blood-poisoning through eating rotten blackfish (370). The wig-

370. This probably simply means a whale.

wams were in a terrible state -- men, women and children lying about as helpless as infants, unable to keep anything on their stomachs on account of their disordered condition. Two old doctors, fully powdered and dressed in their feathers (otherwise naked), went from case to case, and would now and again pause in their performance of rubbing and yelling at their patients. I administered emetics and other medicines and gave much relief. Most of the cases yielded to steady treatment, but in three families fever followed. Death followed in one case only" /cited in English/. According to this, the Yamana were sometimes in danger of being poisoned when they unwisely ate the fat of large mammals, not only of whales, but of seals also, which had been dead for some time (371). Faced with these large animals, our

371. On December 20, 1875, Bridges (MM:X, 81;1876) wrote: "These natives will readily eat animals and birds that have died of themselves, and to this fact is owing much of the mortality among them. Thus Jaminaze some time ago came across a dead seal. He brought it here, made a general distribution, and on the second day it had all been eaten. It made the people smell disagreeably; it was very foul" /cited in English/. He is obviously mistaken when he maintains that the Yamana also eat birds that have died by themselves.

Indians seem at times to abandon the strict self-discipline of which

262 /590 cont./
164 they are capable in other circumstances.

264 Every traveler has frequent and ready opportunity to observe
252 their conduct while eating. It is anything but beautiful. Usually the individual squats beside the fire and waits until the piece of meat in the embers or ashes is done. He takes it out with a little stick, lets it cool a bit on stones or bits of brush lying about, and picks it up with /591/ both fists. Sometimes the piece is still so hot that he cannot hold it. Even so, he tears off large bites with his strong teeth and swallows them without ostensibly chewing. From a large roast the pieces are torn off more than bitten off and swallowed in sizable chunks. Strangely enough, the Yamana chews very little. This applies also to the sometimes tough meat of birds. He quickly swallows hot morsels that he cannot keep in his mouth and following them sometimes takes a swallow of water or a small lump of snow (372). Since they

372. The Selk'nam have the same habit (Vol. I, 297).

quickly put the too hot morsel into their mouths, they constantly make a sucking sound while they move it around in their mouths.

When the mussels that were shoved onto the embers are done, they burst open by themselves. They are fished out with a little stick and allowed to cool a bit on the ground. Then in one hand the Indian takes the shell to which the meat adheres, holds it horizontally, breaks off the empty shell with his other hand, and with his fingers tears out the meat which he immediately pops into his mouth. Finally he holds the flat mussel shell itself to his lips, since the drops accumulated in it are very tasty, and sucks them in noisily. Snail shells are broken into pieces with a handy stone to expose the roasted contents, and the same is done with the calcareous covering of the tasty sea acorn, lepa (Balanus psittacus).

Blubber sausages and the less common blood sausages are opened at one end, held up to the mouth, and the contents fall in. They place baked fish on the trampled earth and separate them with their fingers, the thumb nails used chiefly. The large crabs, axiya (Lithodes antarctica), as well as stekalus (Paralomis

/728 cont./

165 fact that "one woman 38 years old had had seven children, of whom only one had died prematurely" /translated from French/. The most striking case that I can report from recent times is the fate of Walter's children: out of a total of eleven, only two are living.

As we have said, however, it is difficult to understand the reasons for the abnormal infant mortality (166). In any case the

166. The explanations offered by Bridges (a):202 are not very useful. He merely establishes that "few women save all their children; most die in early infancy: a disease in the throat carries many off" /cited in English/. This vague reference to a throat ailment makes us think of diphtheria which was imported by Europeans.

• [164 177]

assumption is justified that natural feeding at the mother's breast in the first year of life is a super guarantee of keeping the child alive than the food children eat from the second to the tenth year. During these years food seems to me far more important for the child than external protection, care, and clothing. A child that has reached the eleventh year has acquired enough physical resistance to go on living; weaklings have been eliminated by that time.

842 A reference to the barrenness of Fuegian woman is in order here. Formerly it was certainly an extremely rare occurrence (167),

167. Hyades (q):188 also represents the view that "sterility is doubtless rare among the Fuegians; we have seen no case of a woman under 25 years old who was sterile" /translated from French/.

and various informants, among them the aged Reverend John Lawrence, could not tell me of any women, except Flora and Gertie, who were childless. If there are no children in a marriage, the woman is regarded as defective. The childless husband, matúma gémnakuwa, takes another woman who without doubt will give him

/729 cont./
145 in life. They are familiar with this phenomenon, and they are quietly resigned to what is in store for them. A few older Indian women said that the change of life caused them and other women scarcely any difficulties worth mentioning. It is not strange that
•144 female diseases were completely unknown to the Yamana of olden times. For a while Nelly Lawrence suffered from a very painful prolapse of the womb (prolapsus uteri). When the attack was over, she emphatically expressed to me her absolute conviction that this condition had hitherto not troubled any woman and that she was the first to suffer from it.

7. Naming

551 For reasons we shall soon mention any festivity or ceremony on the occasion of giving a child a name is superfluous. Every Yamana, without exception, has a proper name, and in addition, most of them also have a personal nickname. Very definite mention of this double naming customary among the Yamana is found in Hyades (q):376 and in Outes (g):55: "A child is given the name of his birthplace or of the peculiarities that distinguish him" /translated from Spanish/ (169). The most important, of course,

> 169. Bridges (a):182 mentions a third kind, namely, "family names, handed down from generation to generation, from father to the eldest son. These kinds of names, generally have no meaning" /cited in English/. See footnote 174 below and Bridges (h):207.

is the actual proper name (170).

> 170. This should be especially emphasized as opposed to Despard (b):698, who reverses the order when he says: "Besides a proper name, a man will have one in memory of his birth-place" /cited in English/.

/730/ It is not hard to choose a proper name, for it is taken from the place where the child was born, and it is given the proper

/1456 cont./

147 Our Fuegians are anything but complaining. They bear physical pain with courageous patience; their feeling of pain is by far not as acute as that of Europeans. Compare Hyades (p): 328. The very first missionaries, Despard (b):698 and Bridges (a):202, mentioned the most common ailments, and Hyades (f): 580 and (q):222 gave an accurate list. I am able to give a few supplementary data from my own observations. The most frequent are regular accidents, namely, burns and wounds (361).

• 164

> 361. Burleigh is absolutely right when he declares: "To meet a person of mature age who has not received an injury in some form or other, either violence or accident, is a rare occurrence" /cited in English/ (MM:XXV, 23;1891). What Hyades (f):585 says is pertinent in this connection: "It is probable that accidents and injuries carry off a large number of natives, for they do not give any care to the injured" /translated from French/.

Persons of all ages complain of headaches, lēkā́pi-sé́x a great deal. Rheumatism, akutar-ī́na or akutaxé́lla, is a common ailment, but its acute form is rare. The first designation probably corresponds to akūtā́sā́na, "to chop off" /cited in English/, in BD:18. Gout affects an individual limb for many people, but it soon passes. The respiratory organs are rarely affected by bronchitis and only in quite exceptional cases by pneumonia and pleurisy. Ailments of this kind are called ẍemṓina-sé́x, that is, "stabs, pains in the chest" (p.1079). Older /1457/ persons frequently cough. Abdominal diseases are rare; instead, there are a great many digestive disorders, chiefly diarrhea caused by immoderate eating or spoiled meat. Eczema and other slight skin troubles are more frequently seen; they usually heal within a short time. It is obvious that untended wounds lead to phlegmon and gangrene. Hyades (f):581 declares: "I have not had to see a single cancerous disease" /translated from French/. It is also true that originally the Yamana were free of syphilis, gonorrhea, and all forms of tuberculosis. Most people suffer from inflammation of the eyes

/1457 cont./

●164 because they are constantly exposed to smoke from the hut fire. Mental disorders occur very rarely, but "idiocy is unknown" /translated from French/, as Hyades (p):339 asserts. Many an aged person suffers from impaired hearing, ufkir-tăuwa. Infectious general diseases, actual epidemics, lĕkhăja, lĕmăja, did not occur before there was contact with Europeans.

759 Thus our Yamana suffered very little from disease. This was especially advantageous because effective remedies are totally lacking in their country (362). They try to alleviate the

362. This has been confirmed a number of times. Fitz-Roy(a):186 writes: "When ill, however seriously, they know of no remedies but rubbing the body with oil, drinking cold water, and causing perspiration by lying near the fire, wrapped up in skins" /cited in English/. Despard (b):698 asserts: "Remedies are simple indeed; they burn the part where pain is felt, or produce counter-irritation by whipping with stinging nettles" /cited in English/. According to Hyades (f):585, "the Fuegians do not know any medicines" /translated from French/. Finally, Aspinall:270 says briefly: "The art of medicine is limited to rubbing and the infusion of a few roots."

pain or ailment with procedures recommended by general health care. For some reason they expect great results when they are unwell by totally abstaining from food for a whole day. As Bridges (i):19 also declares, everyone expects that this will even bring "good health and efficiency in hunting" /cited in English/. For this reason a hunter considers it beneath his dignity to take refreshment with him when he goes hunting. A sick person sits huddled up in his hut, remains notionless, and lets the warmth of the hut fire have its effect on him. When he requests something, a member of the family hands him what he wants. The Yamana often recommend perspiring: the sick person is placed beside the fire and covered with many skins. Blubber is often used: for rheumatism, the affected part of the body is rubbed with it; for

2: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SH6 Yahgan SH6

114 culture. If this large and expensive monograph is not accessible, the following more important papers may be consulted: Gusinde (1921–22, 1924, 1925 a, 1925 c, 1926 a, 1926 c, 1927, 1928 b, 1929); Koppers (1925 a, 1925 b, 1926 a, 1926 b, 1927, 1928 a, 1928 b).

For bibliographies of the *Yahgan* see: Cooper (1917), for sources, with comments on each, to 1917; Lothrop (1928), for sources from 1917 to 1928; Gusinde (1937), for selected and added sources, and for evaluations (pp. 48–101) of the publications of the more important first-hand observers.

19 **Language.**—The *Yahgan* language with its five mutually intelligible dialects constitutes a distinct linguistic family, with no known relationship to any other. The elder Bridges' *Yámana*-English dictionary, the one completed in 1879, contains about 32,000 words, a carefully restricted, not a padded, list, as he himself emphasized (1933, p. xvii). *Yahgan*, in contrast to *Ona*, is markedly euphonic. There were no words for numerals beyond three, and none for fractions.

[114]

16 **Population.**—According to our first dependable estimates, the *Yahgan* population, in the third quarter of the 19th century, totaled between 2,500 and 3,000 souls. In 1881 a sharp decline set in. By 1884 numbers had dwindled to about 1,000; by 1886, to 400; by 1899, to 300; by 1902, to 130; by 1913, to less than 100; by 1922 to 40. The immediate causes of the sudden drop in the eighties were the respiratory diseases and a severe outbreak of measles in 1884, followed by epidemics of typhoid, whooping-cough, and smallpox. Syphilis does not appear to have played an important role. Contributory, or rather basic predisposing, factors were, it seems, the then introduced European ways of life, especially the clothing, but also the food, alcoholic beverages, and type of shelter and work.

[14]

[179]

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

23 **Foods.**—The *Yahgan* had no domesticated plants, and no domesticated animals except the dog. Whether the earlier pre-Columbian and post-Columbian *Yahgan* had dogs is uncertain. No bones of dogs have been found in early archeological sites in *Yahgan* or other Fuegian territory. The earlier explorers,—L'Hermite, 1624; d'Arquistade, 1715—make no mention of the dog in their descriptions of *Yahgan* culture, as none is made of it among the *Alacaluf* by the 13 accounts of them prior to Narbrough's of 1670. The dog was first recorded among the *Yahgan* in 1832 by James Weddell; it is recorded consistently thereafter by later observers (Cooper, 1917, pp. 186–187). Dogs were not eaten.

[84]

[85]

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
S316 Yahgan S316

The Ona and the Haush spoke related dialects and occupied the interior of the main island of Tierra del Fuego; they are often called the Foot Indians because of their manner of living. The Yahgan frequented the south coast of the main island and the islands to the south; the Alacaluf formerly lived at the western end of the Straits of Magellan but have moved northward to Racón sound. The habitat of each tribe as it was half a century ago is shown in pl. IV.

No census of the indigenous population in the old days was ever taken, but from several different estimates the numbers of each tribe seventy-five years ago were approximately:

Ona, 3500	Yahgan, 2800–3000
Haush, 300	Alacaluf, 3500–4000

Since at least half of the Alacaluf lived north of the Straits of Magellan, the total native population of Tierra del Fuego and the adjacent islands can scarcely have been more than 9000.

At the time of the writer's visit (1924–25) the Indian population, including mixed-bloods, was approximately:

Ona, 60–70	Yahgan, 40–50
Haush, 2– 3	Alacaluf, 150

Of the Alacaluf only two were seen south of the Straits of Magellan, as they now live far to the north, for the greater part in the vicinity of Racón sound. The figure for their numbers is the estimate of the Rev. John Williams of Punta Arenas.

Later in the same year (1925) an epidemic of measles ravaged Tierra del Fuego. What happened to the Yahgan I do not know, but Mr. William Bridges wrote me that more than twenty adult Ona and an unknown number of children had died. With the exception of a few mixed-bloods the Indians of Tierra del Fuego are probably extinct.

Because the writer saw little of the Alacaluf and Haush, it is principally of the Ona and Yahgan we shall speak below. Before beginning a detailed description we shall discuss their environment and physical peculiarities, and shall list the features of their culture.

CLIMATE

Tierra del Fuego lies between 53° and 56° south latitude, corresponding to the position in the northern hemisphere of the Aleutian islands, southern Labrador, or the central part of Great Britain.